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Dear Colleagues:

It is with mixed emotions that I write to inform you that effective January 31, 2010, I will be leaving my position with the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services to become the Commissioner of Probation for New York City. While I'm excited to take on a new challenge, I'm also proud of the agency we've built together and I am sad to be leaving so many of you whom I've come to know and respect over the years.

We've come a very long way. Five years ago, the old Youth Services Administration (YSA) was on the brink of court receivership, and was the subject of harsh criticism by the Inspector General's Office, advocates (me amongst them) and the news media alike.

Today's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services is improved in every way and many regard it as a promising national model of how juvenile justice agencies should function. Our case managers see youth in their care far more frequently and the quality of those interactions is much improved; the Oak Hill Youth Center is now closed and New Beginnings Youth Development Center and the Youth Services Center are becoming models for other jurisdictions to emulate; community services are of a much higher quality and the new Lead Entities/Service Coalitions will bring even more improvements; and our "back office" services, without which the agency couldn't function, are greatly improved from Procurement, to IT, to Maintenance and Culinary, to Inspections, Investigations and Licensing, to Research and Quality Assurance.

Our communications to one another and to the general community are better than ever. We have a top notch management team; middle managers and line staff throughout the agency, who are better educated, higher performing and more mission-driven than ever.

Most importantly, we have great relationships with the community, from service providers, to advocates, to parent groups, to ANCs, to our excellent and supportive advisory group. We have excellent relations with Mayor Fenty and the DC Council, without whose help we could never have made it this far.

In short, our agency, which was once derided as an example of dysfunctional DC government, is now viewed locally and nationally as a model to be replicated.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

This all helps the youth in our care.

This all helps make the District of Columbia a safer and better place to live.

And this all, every bit of it; is because of your hard work.

None of this is to say that there is not still a lot of work to do to make the department the kind of agency any of us would want if our own child were in trouble with the law -- there is.

But together we've laid the foundation that has helped dramatically improve services to our young people which we (by which I mean, *you*) can build upon to provide even more excellent services, supports and opportunities in the future. In other words, it is now time for you all to carry on the journey we have started together.

For all of this and for the work I know you will continue to do, I thank all of you, and consider myself privileged to have worked with you these past five years. I'll miss you, the department, and the kids.

Take care of yourselves and once again, thank you for these past five years.

Vinny

PS: If you're ever in the Big Apple, please look me up. I'll be in the office working late.

